

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

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America and World War II, 1941-1945

Lesson 1 *Wartime America*

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What kinds of sacrifices does war require?

Reading HELPDESK

Content Vocabulary

disenfranchise to deprive of the right to vote

cost-plus a government contract to pay a manufacturer the cost to produce an item plus a guaranteed percentage

Sunbelt a new industrial region in Southern California and the Deep South that developed during World War II

zoot suit men's clothing of extreme cut typically consisting of a thigh-length jacket with wide padded shoulders and baggy, pleated pants with narrow cuffs

victory suit a men's suit with no vest, no cuffs, a short jacket, and narrow lapels, worn during World War II in order to save fabric for the war effort

rationing restricting the amount of an item an individual can have due to a limited supply

victory garden garden planted by citizens during war to raise vegetables for home use, leaving more for the troops

Academic Vocabulary

draft a system used for choosing people from the population to serve in the military

coordinate to harmonize or bring into common action, movement, or condition

justify to prove or to show to be just, right, or reasonable

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TAKING NOTES: Organizing

ACTIVITY Use the following graphic organizer to list changes for women and minorities during the war.

	Changes
Women	
African Americans	
Native Americans	
Hispanic Americans	
Japanese Americans	

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

After World War I, the United States returned to isolationism. Eighteen other countries had stronger militaries than the United States when the nation entered World War II. However, only three years later, the United States was making 40 percent of the world's weapons.

Building the Military

GUIDING QUESTION What roles did minorities and women play in the armed forces during World War II?

Germany attacked Poland in 1939. Within days, President Roosevelt increased the size of the army to 227,000 soldiers. Before the spring of 1940, many Americans had opposed a peacetime **draft**. But France surrendered to Germany in June 1940. As a result, Americans changed their opinions about a draft. In September 1940, Congress approved the Selective Training and Service Act. This act was a plan for the first peacetime draft in U.S. history. The act passed easily.

You're in the Army Now

More than 60,000 men joined the army in the month after the attack on Pearl Harbor. At first, the army could not handle so many men joining at once. The army did not have enough training facilities or equipment. In 1940 the Department of Agriculture had transferred over 350,000 acres of land to the War Department. New bases such as the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville, Florida, were built. Existing bases such as Eglin Air Force base were expanded. Many new soldiers lived in tents because there were not enough buildings for them. In training, many men carried sticks instead of guns. They drove trucks labeled "TANK."

New soldiers were given physical exams and injections against the diseases

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smallpox and typhoid. Then the army gave the soldiers uniforms, boots, and available equipment. The soldiers went to basic training for eight weeks. In basic training, they drilled and exercised constantly. They also learned how to work as a team. These soldiers came from all over the country. Training together created close relationships among the troops.

A Segregated Military

Although basic training promoted unity, most new soldiers did not meet Americans from every part of society. At the start of the war, the U.S. military was segregated. African Americans were organized into their own units. However, white officers usually commanded these units. Military leaders usually assigned African American groups to construction and supply units.

Pushing for “Double V” Some African Americans did not support the war. They felt **disenfranchised** by the way the army treated African American soldiers. However, most African Americans agreed that they should support their country. The *Pittsburgh Courier* was a leading African American newspaper at the time. It started the “Double V” campaign. The campaign told readers to support the war to win two victories. One victory would be over Hitler’s racism abroad. The other victory would be over racism in the United States.

African Americans in Combat African American leaders told President Roosevelt that African Americans should be treated like other soldiers. In response, Roosevelt told army leaders to recruit African Americans and to put them into combat. Roosevelt also promoted Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., the highest-ranking African American officer, to the rank of brigadier general.

The air force formed its first African American unit in early 1941. This unit was the 99th Pursuit Squadron. The pilots became known as the Tuskegee Airmen because they trained in Tuskegee, Alabama. One of Tuskegee units was commanded by Lt. Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., the son of Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Sr. This unit helped win the Battle of Anzio in Italy. Three other Tuskegee units protected American bombers on their missions. These units were known as the 332nd Fighter Group. They flew 200 such missions without losing any members to enemy aircraft. In addition, the African American 761st Tank Battalion was officially praised for its service during the Battle of the Bulge.

Other Minorities in the Military At first, Japanese Americans were not allowed to serve. However, as the war continued, second-generation Japanese Americans served in the 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Almost half of the Japanese American soldiers in these units had been in internment camps. These two units together earned more medals than any other unit in the United States military. Approximately 500,000 Hispanic Americans served in the armed forces. They served even though Hispanic Americans experienced hostility. By the end of the war, 17 Hispanic American soldiers had received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

About one-third of all healthy Native American men aged 18–50 served in the military during the war. More than 400 Navajo marines served as “code talkers.” They used the Navajo language to create codes for sending important secret information and orders over field radios.

Half a million Jewish Americans served in the military. About 52,000 earned medals for bravery. Because so many European Jews died in the Holocaust, American Jews

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took on increased leadership in the Jewish community around the world.

The military did not end all segregation during the war. However, it did integrate military bases in 1943. It also steadily grew the role of African Americans within the armed forces. These successes helped prepare for President Truman's decision to fully integrate the military in 1948.

Women Join the Armed Forces

Women also joined the armed forces. The army enlisted them for the first time. However, women did not serve in combat. Instead, they did office work. Giving the many office jobs in the army to women freed more men for combat.

Congress created the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in May 1942. An auxiliary corps is a supporting group that is not part of the main group. Congress appointed War Department official Oveta Culp Hobby as the first director of WAAC. Many women were unhappy that WAAC was not part of the regular army, however. In 1943 the army replaced the WAAC with the Women's Army Corps (WAC). Hobby became a colonel.

The Coast Guard, navy, and marines also formed women's units. Another 68,000 women served as nurses in the army and navy. About 300 women served as Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs). These women flew more than 12,000 flights to deliver planes to the war effort.

PROGRESS CHECK

Summarizing How did the status of women and minorities in the armed forces change during the war?

American Economy in Wartime

GUIDING QUESTION How did the U.S. government mobilize the economy for war?

Fighting a global war troubled President Roosevelt. However, British prime minister Winston Churchill believed that victory depended on industry. He believed that the U.S. economy could create a great deal of power.

Converting the Economy

Industrial war production grew quickly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The government planned to build thousands of warplanes and a navy that could fight on two oceans. Roosevelt believed that government and business had to work together to prepare for war. He created the National Defense Advisory Committee. Roosevelt asked business leaders to be on the committee. The president and his advisers believed that giving industry good reasons to produce goods quickly was the best way to rapidly prepare the economy for war.

Normally, the government asked companies to bid on contracts to produce military equipment. This process was slow. Instead, the government signed **cost-plus** contracts. These agreements said the government would pay a company the cost of making a product. In addition, the government promised to pay a certain

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percentage as profit. Under the cost-plus system, companies made more money when they produced more goods and made them more quickly. The cost-plus system was not cheap. However, it got war materials produced quickly and in large amounts. Cost-plus convinced many companies to change to war production. Congress also formed the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC). This group made loans to companies that wanted to change to war production.

American Industry Gets the Job Done

By the fall of 1941, the government had done a great deal to prepare the economy for war. However, the economy was still not completely ready. The attack on Pearl Harbor at the end of 1941 changed everything. By the summer of 1942, almost all major industries and about 200,000 companies had changed to war production. Together they made the nation's wartime success possible.

Tanks Replace Cars The automobile industry was especially suited to the mass production of military goods. Automobile factories began making trucks, jeeps, and tanks. Mass production of vehicles was important because the country that could move soldiers and supplies most quickly usually won the battle.

Automobile factories also produced helmets, weapons, and dozens of other pieces of military equipment along with vehicles. Henry Ford created an assembly line near Detroit to build the huge B-24 "Liberator" bomber. That factory eventually built more than 8,600 aircraft. Overall, the auto industry made nearly one-third of all wartime military equipment.

Building Liberty Ships Ford's great success in aircraft production was more than matched by Henry Kaiser's work building ships. German submarines were sinking American cargo ships very quickly, so the United States needed a way to build cargo ships as fast as possible. Kaiser focused on speed and results. He did not build the whole ship in one place. Instead, different parts were made in different factories. Then, the parts were brought to the shipyard and put together.

Kaiser's shipyards built many kinds of ships but were best known for basic cargo ships called Liberty ships. When the war began, it took 244 days to build the first Liberty ship. After Kaiser Shipyards began using mass production methods, the average production time dropped to 41 days. Kaiser's shipyards produced 30 percent of all American ships built during the war.

As war production grew, disagreements increased among business leaders, government agencies, and the military. President Roosevelt created the War Production Board (WPB). This group set priorities and production goals. Later, Roosevelt set up the Office of War Mobilization to settle conflicts among the different agencies.

☒ **PROGRESS CHECK**

Explaining How did the government work to quickly prepare the American economy for the war effort?

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Life on the Home Front

GUIDING QUESTION How did World War II change life for women and minorities in the United States?

The war changed U.S. society greatly. Europe and Asia suffered from the war. However, the war had some benefits for the United States. Preparing the economy for war finally ended the Great Depression. The added activity created almost 19 million new jobs. The average family's income nearly doubled.

Economic improvement had a cost, however. Families had to move to find work at defense factories. Housing conditions were terrible. The pressures and prejudices of the era led to strikes and race riots. Crimes by young people increased. Goods were rationed and taxes were higher. Although workers earned more money, they worked longer hours.

When the war began, U.S. defense factories wanted to hire white men. With so many men in the military, however, there simply were not enough white men to fill all of the jobs. Under pressure to produce, employers began to hire women and minorities.

Women in Defense Plants

During the Great Depression, many people believed that married women should not work outside the home. People especially thought that married women should not take jobs that could go to men trying to support their families. Most working women were young and unmarried. They worked in traditional female jobs such as domestic work or teaching. However, the wartime labor shortage forced factories to hire married women for industrial jobs that men had done in the past.

The government hired nearly 4 million women. Mostly, the women did office work such as typing and filing. However, the public was most interested in women who were doing industrial jobs. The symbol of the effort to hire women was "Rosie the Riveter," a character from a popular song by the Four Vagabonds. The song told the story of Rosie, a girl who worked in a factory while her boyfriend served in the marines. Pictures of Rosie appeared on posters, in newspapers, and in magazines. Eventually 2.5 million women worked in shipyards, aircraft factories, and other manufacturing plants.

By the end of the war, the total number of working women had grown from 12.9 million to 18.8 million. After the war, most of these women stopped working. Some women chose to leave their jobs, and others were laid off. However, women's success during the war permanently changed American ideas about women in the workplace.

African Americans Demand War Work

Factories hired women to fill jobs. However, factory owners tried to avoid hiring African Americans. African Americans such as A. Philip Randolph, the head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, were frustrated. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters was an important union for African American railroad workers. Randolph told President Roosevelt that he was organizing a march on Washington. The goal of the march was to get fair treatment for African Americans in jobs related to war work and in the armed forces.

On June 25, 1941, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802. This order said that employers in the defense industry could not discriminate against any group when hiring for jobs. Roosevelt also created the Fair Employment Practices Commission

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to ensure the order was carried out. This commission was the first national civil rights agency created since Reconstruction.

Mexican Farmworkers

The wartime economy also benefited Mexicans. In 1942 the federal government arranged for Mexican farmworkers to help harvest crops in the Southwest. This arrangement was part of the Bracero Program. This program continued until 1964. More than 200,000 Mexicans came to work in the United States during the war. Many also helped build and maintain railroads. Migrant workers, moving from place to place to find work, became important to the Southwest's economic system.

PROGRESS CHECK

Describing What changes did women and minorities experience as a result of economic mobilization?

A Nation on the Move

GUIDING QUESTION How did the wartime relocation of many Americans affect U.S. government and society?

The wartime economy created millions of new jobs. As a result, 15 million Americans moved to find work. The growth of Southern California and cities in the Deep South created a new industrial region. This region was called the **Sunbelt**. Thousands of workers moved to cities with war industries. These cities had to find room for the arriving workers. Tent cities and parks filled with tiny trailers appeared. Congress approved \$150 million for housing in 1940. In 1942, Roosevelt created the National Housing Agency (NHA) to **coordinate** government housing programs.

Racism Leads to Violence

Many African Americans left the South to get jobs in war factories in the North and West. However, African Americans often faced suspicion and intolerance. Racial violence broke out in Detroit on Sunday, June 20, 1943. White teens and African American teens began fighting. This began a riot throughout the city that left 25 African Americans and 9 whites dead.

In Los Angeles, fears over teenage crime and racism against Mexican Americans became linked to the "zoot suit" riots. **Zoot suits** were popular with Mexican American teenagers. They had very baggy, pleated pants. The overstuffed, long jacket had wide lapels. Most men at the time wore a "**victory suit**." A victory suit had no vest, no cuffs, a short jacket, and narrow lapels. This kind of suit was designed to use very little material to save material for the war effort. In June 1943, rumors spread that zoot-suiters had attacked some sailors. As a result, 2,500 soldiers and sailors attacked Mexican American neighborhoods in Los Angeles.

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Japanese, German, and Italian American Relocation

After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, many Americans turned their anger to Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans. On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed an order that allowed the War Department to declare any part of the United States a military zone. He must have felt **justified** four days later when a Japanese submarine surfaced north of Santa Barbara, California. The submarine fired at an oil refinery. Most of the West Coast was declared a military zone. People of Japanese ancestry were removed to 10 internment camps farther inland.

In 1988 President Ronald Reagan apologized to Japanese Americans for the government's actions. He signed a law that awarded \$20,000 to each surviving Japanese American who had been in an internment camp.

Thousands of Germans and Italians also had their freedom restricted. All noncitizen resident Germans and Italians who were 14 years old or over were considered possible enemies. These people had to follow special rules. They could not travel freely. The government could take their personal property. More than 5,000 Germans and Italians were arrested. They were moved to military internment camps.

PROGRESS CHECK

Identifying Cause and Effect How did both voluntary and forced movement during World War II change the United States?

Daily Life in Wartime

GUIDING QUESTION What steps did the government take to stabilize wages and prices?

Both wages and prices began to rise quickly during the war because of the high demand for workers and raw materials. Roosevelt worried about inflation. He created the Office of Price Administration and Civilian Supply (OPACS) and the Office of Economic Stabilization (OES) to regulate wages and certain prices. At the end of the war, prices had risen only about half as much as they had during World War I.

OPACS and OES worked to control inflation. At the same time, the War Labor Board (WLB) tried to prevent strikes. Most American unions had promised not to strike. Instead, they agreed to let the WLB resolve conflicts over wages. By the end of the war, the WLB had helped settle more than 17,000 disagreements.

Support and Sacrifices

High demand for raw materials and supplies created shortages. The OPA began **rationing** many products. The ration system limited how much of something a person could buy. OPACS wanted to make sure the military had the things it needed. Meat, sugar, fats, and oils were rationed. So were processed foods, coffee, shoes, and gasoline. Driving distances were limited. The speed limit was set at 35 miles per hour to save gas and rubber.

Americans also planted gardens in backyards, schoolyards, city parks, and

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empty lots to produce more food for the war effort. Films, pamphlets, and official statements from the government praised people who grew these **victory gardens**. In addition, the government encouraged people to collect scraps of rubber, tin, aluminum, and steel.

The federal government spent more than \$300 billion during World War II. This was more money than the government had spent in total from the time of Washington's administration through the end of Franklin Roosevelt's second term. Congress raised taxes to help cover costs. However, the public opposed large tax increases. Therefore, Congress did not raise taxes as much as Roosevelt wanted. As a result, the extra taxes covered only about 45 percent of the cost of the war. The government issued war bonds to make up the difference. The government sold more than \$100 billion in bonds to individuals, banks, and other financial institutions.

Hollywood Goes to War

In 1942 President Roosevelt created the Office of War Information (OWI). The OWI's job was to improve the public's understanding of the war. In addition, the OWI was the government's official connection with media such as newspapers, television, magazines, and movies. The OWI created detailed guidelines for moviemakers. Moviemakers had to answer a set of questions before making a movie. One of the questions was "Will this movie help win the war?"

The war brought about difficulties for many Americans. Even so, most Americans believed the war was necessary. Despite many changes, the country was unified behind the goal of winning the war.

☒ **PROGRESS CHECK**

Evaluating How did the Office of Price Administration and Civilian Supply assure there were enough supplies for military use?
